

OGDEN, UTAH, SATURDAY, JUNE 17, 1916.

# Hate Smolders in Kentucky Mountains as War on Ku Klux Klan Ends



Time nor change can effect nothing in this case.

Three months later it became known that Dr. Taylor and the Flemings were Ku Klux Klan members, and had not been seen since the day before the day of battle. Several notable circumstances were shown that these men were guilty of the murder of the Mullins family, and must be proven so, otherwise a dark blot would be cast upon the officials of the two commonwealths, Kentucky and Virginia.

Wise County and the State of Virginia offered rewards of \$500 for each outlaw, while the State of Kentucky and Letcher County put on another \$500 for each. Detectives and county sheriffs began systematic searches.

For months the search was kept up. At length the outlaws were found near Camden-on-the-Gauley River, Greenbrier County, West Virginia, heavily fortified.

The officers knew that to charge on them meant death, as they had a wagon load of munitions stored in their retreat. At length a charge was made, which resulted in a glorious victory for the officers. Dr. Taylor, the decided leader, was captured, Cal Flemings was captured and Heman Flemings was wounded, and he gave up in the thickest of the battle.

They were brought to Wise Courthouse, Virginia, and placed in the County Jail amid the most intense excitement that was ever known

mouth of Boone's Fork, a noted camping site, and exactly at the midnight hour, in the moonlight, a fierce, desperate, hand-to-hand battle was fought.

Lead was pumped at both factions for half an hour. In the terrible conflict three horses were killed. One of them proved to be a fine steed, the property of Blaine Combs, but he was believed not to have been a member of the band. It will be remembered that Combs was killed on the streets of Manchester, Clay County, a year ago.

Another murder in the Boone Hill conflict was that of Louis Lucas, whose death was kept a secret for several months. From trails of blood that led into the mountain fastnesses it was evident that others of the outlaws were shot and wounded. However, the extent of the work accomplished in this battle will never be known. Previous to this conflict it was not known that any of the Lucas' were involved.

In April, 1911, the law-abiding element in every corner of the state declared the lawlessness by the Ku Klux Klan in the Letcher County mountains must stop.

Gov. Beckham placed an ample reward upon the heads of all the members of the outlaw band. A detective, John W. Wright, a fearless officer, who has landed more criminals to justice than any other man in the South, was first to volunteer his services.

At length an officers' posse was organized, comprising fifteen men. With Wright in the lead, and with a bountiful supply of munitions, they went into the Boone's Fork Mountains, bent on running the outlaw band to earth at a risk of their lives. After days of ceaseless search the band was found in a fortification in a cave on the leading mountain spur between Millstone Creek and Boone Fork.

## Boy, 17, Is Killed

HOWEVER, when the officers' posse confronted the outlaws the latter opened fire. For half an hour a desperate battle waged. A reputed leader of the Ku Klux Klan was a crack marksman, having won many prizes while in camp at Chickamauga Park, Ga., during the Spanish-American war.

When the smoke cleared away young Willie Wright, 17-year-old son of the late William S. Wright, assassinated by the Reynolds faction, lay dead upon the ground, a steel ball having pierced his abdomen. To avenge his father's death, young Wright had joined the officers' posse. Isaac Millard of Pike County, the second victim, lay dead. He was of the officers' posse. John Henry Elkins, a deputy sheriff of Letcher County, was desperately wounded. The fourth victim was dangerously wounded.

Ku Kluxer John Reynolds was mortally wounded, and was carried to the settlements by the officers' posse, who guarded him for weeks, between life and death, when he at length recovered.

Willie Wright died before he realized that a ball from his rifle had given John Reynolds his nicked man, a desperate wound, but it did, Reynolds, at length recovered, was tried and given a life sentence in the Kentucky Penitentiary. He is now serving his sentence. Following this battle, indignation was aroused in every section of the commonwealth, and a company of state militia, comprising the best men in the county, was organized and equipped for immediate service. For over six months excitement ran high.

At length, and at a time when all of the Ku Klux Klan members seemed determined to die with their boots on, they gave up to the officers, at least five of them.

George Cook, relative of Bill Cook, John and Martin Bently, Dal Johnson and son, Newcome, after they were assured of absolute protection from mob rule.

After a close chase and a heated engagement, Mart and John Wright, Jr., relative to John W. Wright, the detective, gave up to the officers' posse. Thus, with John Reynolds, being confined in a hospital, eight of the desperate Ku Klux Klan were apprehended, to await a just and impartial trial. Later 125 and 200 Flemings were apprehended at a country dance on Boone's Fork. A desperate battle was narrowly averted.

A Reynolds, who was reputed to be the leader of the Ku Klux Klan at this time, had disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed him up. Even his aged mother, his young wife and children knew nothing of his whereabouts. They even mourned him as dead.

The Ku Klux Klan members were removed to Pineville, Bell County, as justice could not have been given them in the home county, owing to the intense excitement that was prevalent. They were all tried separately, and each received life sentences in the Kentucky Penitentiary.

## Girls Fight with Rifles

IN many of the battles with the Ku Klux Klan, girls, scarcely out of their teens, have been known to take part in the skirmishes. One of the fiercest battles at Boone's Fork Miss Neva Johnson, barely 17, proved herself a heroine. In the thickest of the battle she rushed into the conflict, rifle in hand, and opened fire. She was the last to retreat, and it is superfluous to say her efforts were effective.

During the reign of the Ku Klux Klan in Knott County the outlaws attacked the home of H. C. Moore, a prosperous farmer, in his absence from home. His 16-year-old daughter rushed outside, killed one of the outlaws with a club, and, wounding his rifle from him, drove the outlaws away.

During the same month Virginia Bill Fraley, past 50, living on Upper Troublesome Creek, in Knott County, was robbed and later murdered by the Ku Klux Klan. His wife, two years his junior, interfered and she was whipped.

This outrage caused much excitement among the law-abiding element of Knott County.

"As long as the present generation survives there will be more or less Ku Klux Klan blood existing in the whole of Eastern Kentucky," spoke a prominent official of Letcher County to the writer recently. That official knew more of the conditions of Eastern Kentucky and her people than any other man in it. There are occasional outbreaks in Pike, Perry, Harlan and Knott.

## Woman Brutally Whipped

IN the June following Mrs. Mary Vanover was unmercifully whipped at her home on Lower Elkhorn Creek. Two residences were burned by the Klan on Elkhorn Creek in the same month, and not an arrest was made.

In October, 1903, Tandy Brannham, an old outlaw feud leader and Ku Klux Klan organizer, was hanged at Wise Courthouse, Va., for the murder of a man named Hobbs in a Virginia mining town. Brannham, just before his departure from this state, killed old man Henry Vanover in Vanover's own corn field on Elkhorn Creek. His whereabouts were unknown until he murdered Hobbs in Virginia.

**T**HE Whitesburg, Ky., company of state militia has been mustered out. The members considered the work for which this company was organized had been completed, they failed to meet regularly to drill. The state authorities considered their work well and permanently done. The company, when it was mustered out recently, was composed of sons and relatives of men who were the original members.

That is the way a news item might be written. Ordinarily, the local newspaper of a town that boasts of a company of militia, would add to this item the names of the men. The metropolitan newspapers of a state in which a company of militia is disbanded would use a bare mention of the fact if the item did not get lost. But the Whitesburg company did work that is nationally famous.

The fact that it has been mustered out means victory to those who reside in Eastern Kentucky.

To those who once resided in Eastern Kentucky, many of whom will never dare return, it recalls deeds that are never discussed except far away from the scenes. To many of the exiles, the news means that possibly they can return, perhaps to fight again. For the souls of hate are smoldering in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky.

To many, the fact that the company recently was composed mostly of sons and relatives of the original members would be significant. That in itself shows the spirit of the Kentucky mountaineers—"Sons and Relatives." It is the feud spirit that will last at least through the present generation.

The Whitesburg Company of the Kentucky National Guard was organized in 1912, a long time ago in Kentucky mountain history, to exterminate a band of Ku Klux Klan which was terrorizing Letcher and adjoining counties, and whose influence was growing constantly. The Whitesburg company immediately began waging a conflict similar to the United States punitive expedition into Mexico. That is why only sons and relatives belonged to the company in 1915.

The deed that caused the formation of the company was the assassination of twelve persons—men, women and children—as they rode in a wagon along a lonely mountain trail near Whitesburg.

This aroused all Eastern Kentucky and the company of militia was immediately formed.

In the same county, but not connected with "Killing Rock," as the boulder has been known since the massacre, is a cemetery containing thirty graves. Twenty-nine of those buried were murdered. It is stated by people who live in the county.

## Ku Klux Bred by Feuds

BEGINNING now on the feuds of the Kentucky mountains, and especially the Ku Klux Klan, it can be said in the outset that every county in that vast region can recite of dastardly crimes and assassinations of the bloody K. K. K., as it is often termed. Breathitt County saw her exciting days during the Cook-Hargis feud. She has also been affected with more or less Ku Klux Klan depredations.

Pike County on the east saw her Hatfield-McCoy feud waged with deadly fervor for the ten long years of its reign. The Hatfield-McCoy feud has been halted indefinitely, but there are yet sympathizers in both factions that delight in relating the doings of each other with a burning hatred that may one day terminate in something desperate to the peace and

quietude of Pike County. Pike has also been the "hot bed" of action for many Ku Klux Klan depredations.

Perry County, on the south, witnessed her dark days of terror during the fifteen long years of the French-Eversole feud—the war that entirely exterminated both factions of the feud—and, as has been said, "Dead men tell no tales." Fifty persons were killed, while every effort to suppress the lawless rampant during the terrible onslaught was without avail. The last victim was Judge Josiah Combs, past 70, assassinated as he sat at his supper table in his home in the town of Hazard, enjoying his supper meal.

Some years later there was an occasional outbreak of the Ku Klux Klan in Perry County, and a number of innocent, helpless women were mistreated. Then the lawbreakers "dispersed" into Bloody Breathitt County. Harlan County, on the southeast, has had a feud—the Howard-Eversole vendetta that waged for five years or more. At least forty persons were killed. Knott County on the north was the scene of the Jones-Wright feud war of ten years' duration.

## More Than Thirty Slain

DETECTIVE JOHN W. WRIGHT of Letcher County, who has done more to bring the Ku Klux Klan war to a close than any other man in the state, commanded the forces on the Wright side in this memorable conflict. Several skirmishes were fought over the Knott border in Letcher County during the war—the war which put more than thirty people sleeping on the hillsides.

From the organization of the Ku Klux Klan in Letcher County in the year 1890 up to 1912—a reign of twelve years—many murders and robberies were committed.

During these years a spirit of contention was being waged between Dr. M. B. Taylor, once a

noted mountain physician, and Cal and Heman Flemings, brothers, on one side, and the family of Ira Mullins, seven strong, on the other. It was on a beautiful summer morning, June 13, 1892, that the enemy, Dr. Taylor, and the Flemings, lay in wait in a secluded spot near the public roadway on Cumberland Mountains, leading across into Virginia. For days they lay in wait.

The Mullins were driving in a wagon. At length the quietude of the mountains were wrought in confusion, its stillness reverberated by hundreds of rifle shots from the outlaws, and the lives of six of the family of seven were forfeited. Here is the scene that met the eyes of the hundreds who were called to the lonely mountain trail.

Ira Mullins, the head of the household, lay gasping for his last breath across the breast of his devoted wife, who was dead. Two balls had pierced her heart. Near by lay the prostrate form of Eva Mullins, the 17-year-old daughter. One ball had pierced her forehead. On the opposite side lay two sons and a daughter-in-law dead. John Harrison Mullins, 9 years old, the only surviving member, jumped from the shakily old wagon just as the firing was begun and fled for his life.

Shot after shot was fired at him as he disappeared into the underbrush. Two balls pierced the crown of his hat and a third cut his suspender in twain.

## An Enemy to End of Time

TODAY, with tears trickling down his cheeks, John Harrison Mullins recites the experiences of that day, while now and forever, even after death, he swears. Mullins is an avowed enemy of the Ku Klux Klan. He has sworn by a higher power that he will fight them to a finish for all time, and, like most mountaineers, Mullins has been true to his words, his conviction.

## Nearly Every Home Robbed

TWO years later, however, the Ku Klux Klan faction showed a membership of perhaps 200 in Letcher County alone, while each of the adjoining counties contained more or less Ku Klux Klan members. From 1890 to the spring of 1900, more than almost the whole of the mountain's peaceful homes were pillaged, farmers were robbed, innocent and helpless women were made the victims of the most infamous treatment from the hands of the outlaw band. During this period there were many murders committed by the Klan.

In 1901, it seemed as if the Ku Klux Klan faction had broken out anew, and during the first six months of the year fifty helpless women were made the victims of their brutal injustice, while half as many men were fogged until Eastern Kentucky became a disgrace. Perhaps twenty persons were killed in Letcher County alone. Operations in this county were along Boone's Fork and Rockhouse creeks and adjacent territory.

It was on Boone's Fork that on a cold night in the month of January, 1901, that Mrs. Jimmie Hall, a respectable widow, aged 60, and her 14-year-old son, Sherwood Reynolds, were murdered by the Ku Klux Klan. First, the outlaws robbed the poor woman, then they lay her in her night gown out into the snow and whipped her until she died. Her young son offered resistance and they shot him dead on the ground. They dispersed into the mountain fastnesses, leaving the bodies alone in the snow.

At length it was suspected that John Reynolds was a leader in the depredations, and this was detailed to Gov. Beckham. He likewise placed a reward of \$1000 each upon the heads of two Reynolds and a Potter, while \$500 was placed upon the remaining thirteen. A few days later, and at the exact moment that Senator William Goebel fell in the Capitol square in Frankfort, William S. Wright, a prominent and wealthy logging man, likewise fell from the hands of assassins as he was riding along the public road near his home, en route to work on Boone's Fork Creek, in the heart of the Ku Klux Klan region.

## Entire State Indignant

HUNDREDS of other depredations were committed throughout the county, but the assassination of Wright caused a wave of indignation to sweep over the entire state. One a frosty night in November of the previous year, George Sexton, a blind mail carrier, was called from his home on the Camp Branch Creek at midnight and most horribly whipped. A brother, however, rushed to the scene, procured medical aid and saved his life.

In the same month the band whipped a dozen or more of helpless women in the vicinity and made the nights hideous by the constant fire of their rifle. A few nights later the home of Mr. Rowlet Hale, postmaster at Rockhouse, was fired into, and the family were given a close escape. A steam grist mill and a number of pretty homes were burned in the neighborhood of Rockhouse Creek.

Leaving that section, the Ku Klux Klan members moved to Boone's Fork in the upper part of the county, where they were to renew hostilities. On the second night after their arrival at Boone's Fork they entered the home of John P. Craft, a respectable river farmer, and whipped Mrs. Della Craft and Sarah Ciesek, a servant at the Craft home. Hickory clubs were used until the victims were half dead.

A mob of enraged citizens was organized, and went in pursuit of the outlaws. The citizens' band overtook the outlaws at Boone Hill at the